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ABSTRACT

A study by Berg illustrates the research that has been conducted into the impact of collective bargaining on structural elements and role differentiation in education. The study compared principals from unionized and nonunionized school districts in Illinois; its intent was to determine specific role changes and effects upon principals as a result of collective bargaining. Findings of the study indicated that there was no significant relationship between bargaining and the rules orientation, role ambiguity, or locus of factors controlling principals' behavior. Grounding educational research in the literature on bargaining in the private sector is faulty, because some of the most important effects of collective bargaining may be relatively insignificant in education. Therefore principals would be expected to experience less impact than industrial foremen or supervisors. In addition to differences in the effects of collective bargaining, education and the private sector differ in their approach to bargaining. Although the role of principals may be more rigorously prescribed in districts with collective bargaining, this may merely represent the institutionalization of informal structures into formal ones. (JG)

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THE IMPACT OF COLLECTIVE BARGAINING UPON THE PRINCIPAL

by

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The Impact of Collective Bargaining Upon the Principal

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In the study of the impact of collective bargaining upon school administrators, the traditional areas of inquiry have been derived from organizational theories. Whenever a new program or reorganization has been imposed upon the schools the alignment of authority structures and the task and role assignments have received research attention. For example, the professionalization of teachers, the relationship between principals and teachers and the non-instructional teacher demands have been areas receiving attention. More specifically, the issues which have been investigated regarding collective bargaining have been: modifications or additions of rules, regulations and procedures; modifications or additions to grievance procedures; modificationsor additions to job specification, and relocation of power. Because these issues in general, do deal with structural elements and/or role differentiation probably explains the preoccupation with the two aspects in the research.

For the purpose of this paper, a study by Berg[1] will be used as illustrative of research conducted in this area. For this reason a brief description of the study will be provided. The study was conducted in Illinois comparing unionized and non-unionized school districts. Unionized school districts were defined as districts engaging in negotiation between teachers' organizations and the board of education resulting in formal

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[1]Berg, Paul, "The Impact of Collective Bargaining Upon the Principal," Administrator's Notebook, 21, 9 (1973), 1-4.

written agreements containing specific items dealing with salaries, fringe benefits, working conditions, and a grievance procedure. Non-unionized school districts were defined as school districts who provided for no teacher-board negotions or negotiations were limited to monetary issues.

The data were collected from a stratified random sample of principals drawn from the list of collective bargaining districts in Illinois. Each of the selected 72 principals was matched with a non-collective bargaining principal on the basis of district type and size, location, type of school and sex. Mailed questionnaire and telephone interviews were used to gather the information. There was an 82% rate of return.

Bargaining status was the independent variable. Rules orientation, status anxiety, role ambiguity and causation were the dependent variables. Community support, school-community conflict, racial conflict, accountability plans, organizational change, sex of the principal, age and experience of the principal, size of district, type of district, size of school, type of school, socio-economic composition of the student body, and years of bargaining were the control variables.

The theoretical perspective which determined the dependent variables was derived from the literature on collective bargaining in the private sector and in the field of education. The specific intent was to determine the specific role changes and effects upon the principal. Therefore, it was hypothesized that due to the proliferation of rules and regulations during professional negotiations, principals in unionized school districts would tend to exhibit greater dependence upon formal rules in non-unionized school districts. It was also hypothesized that principals in unionized school districts would experience greater status anxiety than principals

in non-unionized school districts. The contributing factors were believed to be: that collective bargaining brings about a fundamental change in the authority structure; that consultation with union members would be required prior to decision; that anticipating teacher reaction to administrative decisions and formulation of palatable justifications for decisions would become necessary activities; that the principal's need to adapt new methods for gaining the cooperation of subordinates would involve increased use of informal trade-offs. Also, the presence of a union representative would pose a potential source of power. Additionally, the most important source of status anxiety would be the vulnerability of the principal in a collective bargaining setting. Union contract typically providing for grievance procedures would permit teachers to publicly expose the performance of administrators who would violate, in the teachers' judgment, the intent or letter of the agreement. Also, the union might go over the principal's head on any issue which would further attenuate his authority and status within the organization.

The third hypothesis tested concerned itself with principals in unionized school districts experiencing more role ambiguity than principals in non-unionized districts. Role ambiguity was conceived to be a direct function of the discrepency between the information available and that which is required for adequate performance of a role. The role of the principal would therefore be especially ambiguous where collective bargaining is a recent development due to rising uncertainty. Also, the principal might not know how to fulfill the expectations. The question would then arise regarding teachers being treated as professionals or as employees.

The fourth hypothesis focused upon the principal's perception regarding

the locus of factors controlling his behavior. It was hypothesized that principals in unionized school districts would be more likely to perceive external forces as the locus of causation of their behavior than will principals in non-unionized districts. When an event is perceived as contingent upon luck, fate, the control of others, or as unpredictable, belief in external control is maximized. When a person perceives an event to be contingent upon his own behavior or his own relatively permanent characteristics it reveals a belief in internal control. There is also a general assumption in collective bargaining being a zero-sum game, and that the loss of power for the principal implies power gained by others. This relocation of power would be experienced by the principal in a number of ways: 1) the principal's area of decision-making would be reduced; 2) rules and procedures would be established to regulate his behavior; 3) pressures from both superordinates and subordinates to stay within the limits of his contractually circumscribed authority would be reminders of the presence of external controls; 4) the local union representative with direct lines of communication to the principal's superiors would remind the principal of his reduced influence; 5) principals often unrepresented at negotiating sessions would be likely to view the rules resulting from these sessions as externally imposed.

The findings of the study indicate that there was no significant relationship between collective bargaining and rules orientation, status anxiety, role ambiguity, or locus of factors controlling his behavior.

The above piece of research has been used as an illustration of the types of research being conducted to assess the effects of collective bargaining upon schools and school participants. The research was grounded

in the literature on collective bargaining in the private sector and in education. This general assumption may be faulty because three of the most important effects of collective bargaining in the private sector may be relatively insignificant in education. For example, in the area of industrial jurisprudence, it is considered that one of the greatest contributions has been to protect the worker from arbitrary discipline and discharge without due process requirements. In education, however tenure protects teachers from arbitrary dismissal through provision of tenure statures. This safeguard exists apart from a teacher-board contract. Also, a negotiated agreement has little or no effect with regard to the disciplining of teachers. Private sector labor agreements normally contain standards for discipline of workers with a graduated series of penalties which may include an oral reprimand, a written reprimand, a brief suspension from work without pay, a longer suspension and finally discharge. In education, there may be only a very limited application of this concept of progressive discipline.

A second area of importance in negotiation within the private sector is the eligibility for fringe benefits and decisions regarding lay-offs and promotions within an hierarchy of jobs. Individuals must be placed on a differentiated pay scale according to seniority. In schools, seniority has traditionally been a factor in the placement of teachers on the salary schedule; otherwise this principle has limited application in schools. Fringe benefits are generally provided equally to all teachers regardless of seniority. Lay-offs have been scarce in teaching. Furthermore, in school organizations there is no hierarchy of jobs for teachers comparable to that in the private sector. With few exceptions one is either a teacher or is promoted into the ranks of management.

A third difference is in the area of "effort bargaining." In the private sector, negotiations revolve around the issue of how much work will be done for what wage. Negotiations in education include salary and other monetary issues, but rigid work rules and production quotas which may be critical in private sector agreements are seldom included in teacher-board contracts.

A long as collective bargaining in education lacks some of the dimensions which give it potency in the private sector, principals would be expected to experience less impact than the industrial foreman or supervisor.

In addition to differences in the effects of collective bargaining, education and the private sector differ in their approach to bargaining. Unlike industrial unionization where collective bargaining is rooted in conflict of interest, principals and teachers have traditionally worked together in pursuit of similar professional goals. Therefore, collective bargaining does not seem to have exerted major impact on the principal which most have presumed and some have feared.

A further analysis of the three factors presented above may explain the growth of unionization among teachers. Regarding the first aspect related to standards for discipline, in education, cases of transfers and undesirable behavior may be times when unionization is of some aid. There are however, means for dismissing teachers within contractual agreements. Union membership may however, protect teachers from being transferred from more desirable schools to less desirable.

The second area which may be inspected is that of lay-offs. Today, due to declining enrollments, teachers are being dismissed due to loss of students. These decisions made lightly or biased may give rise to union membership.

Another related issue is that the number of students left over by the dismissed teacher need to be assigned to those teachers remaining. The assignments made may require union intrusion, particularly if the possibility exists that those with additional assignments beyond teaching may assume some of the teaching duties. This is of considerable importance to teachers holding special assignments and specialists. They may be assigned partial student loads in order to provide stable student assignment to the rest of the teachers.

Additionally, distinctions in teachers' assignments are being sought. Areas where negotiations can focus are in additional time allotments for such activities as extra-curricular, sports, music, theater or drama and others. Teacher contracts, traditionally have not dealt with these matters, but today such duties as lunch duty, playground duty, before and after school supervision duties are being contested as not being part of the teaching role. Union membership may aid in clarifying these occupational requirements.

If these considerations in fact influence union membership, the impact upon the building principal may be significant. Teaching being different from managing and administering does present the "conflict of interest" aspect which is an important factor in the establishment of collective bargaining.

In summary, then, we may find that principals may in fact be holding a more rigorously prescribed role in districts where collective bargaining has been established. However, the consequences do not need to be considered as negative. It may be that since it has been assumed that if teachers receive benefits, principals or others would lose theirs and the negative aspects of collective bargaining has been overemphasized. Instead, what may occur is the institutionalization of informal structures into formal ones and all benefit equally.